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LETTER DATED 16 MAY 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith answers by a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to questions put by the Korean Central News Agency on 14 May 1994.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) PAK Gil Yon
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Answers by a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to questions put by the Korean Central News Agency on 24 May 1994

As is known, the replacement of fuel rods has begun at our 5-megawatt experimental nuclear power station according to its operation plan.

This refuelling is part of the undertakings to normalize our peaceful nuclear activities.

As we have clarified time and again, we could not freeze the operation of the graphite-moderated reactor system for an indefinite period, incurring economic losses, since the prospect of implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States of America agreement on converting the graphite-moderated reactor system to a light-water reactor system became dim as a result of the abortion of the third round of talks.

Moreover, the replacement of fuel rods at the 5-megawatt experimental nuclear power station could not be delayed any longer in view of its technical safety.

That is why we sent a telex message to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 19 April informing it of our replacement plan in advance and requesting it to observe it and promptly take necessary measures for the replacement of fuel rods.

Later, we sent telex messages to the Agency on four occasions, repeatedly requesting it to take relevant measures, including the removal of seals for a smooth operation of the facilities. And we agreed to all the demands of the Agency with regard to its observation except for the selection and preservation of the fuel rods, a matter which is beyond our unique status, and issued in good time entry visas to the Agency's inspectors.

Moreover, we allowed, as an exception, inspection activities for the continuity of safeguards requested by the secretariat of the Agency and even an "additional inspection", which it described as an "uncompleted inspection" during its inspection in March, taking into consideration the fact that the United States withdrew the precondition of "exchange of special envoys between the north and the south of Korea" which it had insisted on.

The secretariat of the Agency, however, persistently avoided sending a group of inspectors on unreasonable pretexts and did not take the necessary measures for the replacement of the fuel rods. Under such conditions, we had no other choice but to remove seals and start taking out the fuel rods for safety reasons. In this connection, we notified the Agency that the whole course of the replacement of fuel rods would be placed under the strict watch of the Agency's cameras.

All this was motivated by our utmost sincerity to prove the non-diversion of the replaced fuel rods to non-peaceful purposes and demonstrate the uprightness of our nuclear activities.

It is self-evident that such inspection activities falling under the categories of routine and ad hoc inspections as selection and preservation of some of the fuel rods can never be allowed in view of our unique status following a temporary suspension of the effectuation of our declared withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

To select and preserve some of the fuel rods at this juncture means to take samples. This is an inequitable attitude ignoring our present unique status, which excludes ad hoc inspection, and a prejudiced, unreasonable demand blindly casting "suspicion" on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

We have already clearly notified IAEA that we will contain all the spent fuel under strict surveillance of IAEA and fully allow IAEA to measure it when the nuclear issue is settled between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

It is hardly understandable for the IAEA secretariat to insist on selecting and preserving some of the fuel now, although it will be able to get the most correct results if it measures all the fuel at that time.

This makes us suspect that the IAEA secretariat is not interested in the measurement of the fuel rods but is seeking the political purpose of gradually undermining our unique status under the cloak of measurement.

In its report on the results of the inspection in March at the Board of Governors of IAEA and the United Nations Security Council, the secretariat said it was "indispensable" to wind up the "incomplete inspection activities" at the radiochemical laboratory. So, we allowed them and now the secretariat says it is "indispensable" to select and preserve fuel rods. This proves that there is no credibility in the attitude of the secretariat.

This makes us conclude that the secretariat's demand for selecting and preserving fuel rods at this juncture is aimed at fabricating another "inconsistency", which was one of the root causes of our withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and justifying its partiality towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In view of our unique status, we are only obliged to provide the continuity of safeguards through the verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material, not the verification of the completeness and correctness of the initial inventory.

Although we decided to contain the fuel rods strictly and put them under the control of the Agency, some quarters of the United States are now spreading the rumour that we are changing the fuel rods to extract enough plutonium for the manufacture of four or five nuclear bombs. This is quite contradictory to the fact and cannot be construed other than as a sinister intention to intensify

pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea under the pretext of refuelling.

Actually, refuelling is taking place under the watch of the cameras installed by the Agency. So, there is no ground to worry about the diversion of the replaced fuel rods for another purpose.

Now some quarters are contending that, if we stopped and put off refuelling, the problem of observation might be solved. This is, however, an unrealistic speculation that does not take into account the characteristics of the technical safety of our experimental atomic power plant. If refuelling is stopped midway, it may cause a new danger in view of safety requirements.

But we think that since refuelling has just begun, there still remain possibilities to resolve the problem.

We proposed to the Agency negotiations for an agreement on practical matters related to the presence at the replacement of fuel rods along with complicated outstanding issues with it.

The solution to the issue depends on the attitude of the Agency.

If the Agency persists in its unreasonable demand, ignoring our unavoidable conditions regarding the replacement of the fuel rods, the issue would become more complicated.

We will as ever make every possible effort for a fair and fundamental solution to the nuclear issue.